

Tolerating Other People

I used to look forward to every season of the year. To some extent the attraction is in the form of smell.

The smell of Springtime, the smell of Autumn, the blossom, the cutting of lawns, the opening of windows, the cool breezes, the forest, the beach, the city.

Time and space have smells. The night air is different to the day. The freezing air in my nostrils at Midwinter is special. The autumn leaves swept into piles, the rain wet city streets and the garden mud. So many smells and textures and feelings.

Years ago I used to smoke tobacco until I realised that I was stupidly paying the tobacconist for my own early death. Then, after I had successfully kicked the cigarette habit, I took to guarding my respiratory system by covering my mouth and nose with my hand and holding my breath until I had safely passed any streetcorner smokers.

Why shouldn't I? Surely I am allowed to protect my own body from harm? They are my lungs and I shall protect them. I also cover my ears to protect them from exceptionally loud sirens of emergency vehicles.

One time a woman followed me across the park, shouting abuse at me and demanding to know why I was covering my mouth and nose as I passed her tobacco smoke. Apparently protecting my lungs from carcinogens is a social insult and I should be ashamed of myself for protecting the health of my body.

Another time a chap told me that covering my ears when a loud ambulance siren was passing meant that I was "doing a protest". It seems that there are elements in society who take offence at the sight of individual human beings protecting their own bodies from harm. This is a bit strange when you consider that the government insists on everyone wearing crash helmets on motorbikes and using seat belts in motor cars. It appears that protecting one's health and safety is only acceptable when the government has told us to do it. It is seen as an enormous insult or a "protest" if we care about our health and safety without receiving government permission to do so.

Now the whole "vaping" thing is abroad in the land. I hate it. The smell is horrible, resembling some sort of chemical based perfume gone wrong. The chemicals contained within the vapour are dangerous. They include poisons and heavy metals. Perhaps the worst thing is that they ruin our enjoyment of the seasons and nature.

So we endeavour to tolerate other people when they smoke, vape or take umbrage at our small acts of self protection.

Some states in America are legalising cannabis. That wouldn't worry me as long I don't have to breathe it in. My opinion is that they can destroy themselves with tobacco, cannabis, opium, heroin, cocaine, vaping, alcohol or any other poison of their choice. Just as long as

they don't try to make me have it. That's where I draw the line. They can shorten their own lives if that's what they want but they must consume it in some form which doesn't inflict it upon others. Eating tobacco or drugs or drinking alcohol should be entirely their own stupid choice but smoking or vaping are unacceptable because smoking and vaping inflict the harm on innocent passers by.

If it was up to me I would make the smoking and vaping thing illegal but the voluntary taking of those poisons by methods which don't harm other people would remain legal. The individual would also have a legal obligation to avoid smoking or vaping in places where there are children and animals.

Let's enjoy the smells of nature and the seasons. Let's enjoy the freshness of the night air.